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623 South Wabash Avenue **CHICAGO**

SAFETY RAZORS FIRST

A BLACKFACE ACT

BY
JOHN E. LAWRENCE

AUTHOR OF

"Dixie Minstrel First-Part," "Jubilee Minstrel First-Part," etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

SAM. Well, it's my brother's hat.

BILL. Are you trying to kid me? What are you doing here, anyway?

SAM. Nuffin'.

BILL. What do you want?

SAM. Nuffin'.

BILL. Well, take it and get out. (*Shoves him right, then goes center.*) As I said before, ladies and gentlemen, I am here to introduce the Peerless Combined Safety Razor and Potato Peeler. This marvelous invention is— (*He turns and looks at SAM, who is standing to the right of BILL, gawping into his face.*) What are you looking at?

SAM. Nuffin'.

BILL (*to audience*). It is my intention to give you a demonstration of this unique invention. Now, in the first place— (*Looks at SAM, who is vigorously scratching his leg.*) Don't do that. (*SAM stops scratching. BILL again addresses audience.*) As I said, it is my intention— (*To SAM, who is again scratching.*) Don't do that, I tell you!

SAM. Why not?

BILL. It doesn't look good.

SAM. Well, it sure does feel good.

BILL. You get out of here. Go on home.

SAM (*going left*). I ain't got no home.

BILL. You fool around me any more and I'll dig you one.

SAM. Yas, suh. (*Exits left.*)

BILL (*to audience*). There is nothing intricate about this invention. The merest child can work it. All that you have to do is—

(*Blam-blam-blam-blam! Louder and heavier than before, SAM's footsteps resound as he runs from left to right behind the drop. BILL gives an exclamation of disgust and angrily looks right.*)

SAM enters right, with a medicine bottle in his hand.

SAM. How do.

BILL (*crossing quickly to SAM*). What's the idea of

these interruptions? Can't you see that I am trying to interest these people in the article that I am demonstrating?

SAM. Yas, suh. (*Starts to hop and skip on one foot.*)

BILL. Stop it, I say! What do you mean by running and skipping all over the place?

SAM. It's de doctor's orders.

BILL. Doctor's orders?

SAM. Yas, suh. Dat's de way I got to take my medicine. It says so on de bottle. Read it.

BILL. Read it yourself.

SAM. I can't read in de day time. I went to night school.

BILL. Do you mean to say that you can't read?

SAM. I can read readin', but I can't read writin'. (*Holds bottle out to BILL.*) What do it say it says?

BILL (*taking bottle, reads*). "Take a tablespoonful every hour for two days running, then skip an hour."

SAM. Dat's it. Take it two days runnin', den skip an hour. (*Starts to skip.*)

BILL. Stop it! And get out of here. If you interrupt me again I am going to punch you on the nose so hard that if you don't fall down I'm going to run around and see what's holding you up. Now get.

SAM. Yas, suh. (*Crosses to left and exits.*)

BILL (*goes center and addresses audience*). Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will pardon me. These interruptions are very annoying. As I was about to say: When this little article is used for shaving purposes it is placed against the face so—

SAM sticks his head in, right.

SAM. Say, boss!

BILL. Remember what I said I'd do to you!

SAM. Yas, suh. I just wants to ask a question.

BILL. Go ahead.

SAM. What's behind dat curtain? (*Points to back drop.*)

BILL. There is nothing behind that curtain.

SAM. Dere ain't much in front of it, neither. (*Withdraws head quickly as BILL starts toward him.*)

BILL (*looking after SAM*). Well, he's gone at last. (*To audience.*) As I was saying, you place the razor so, holding the blade at an angle of forty-five degrees—

(*Blam-blam-blam-blam! Again the footsteps are heard passing from left to right behind the drop. BILL loses control of his temper. He throws the grip on the stage, tears off his coat and runs right, turning up his shirt sleeves. He stands, right arm drawn back and fist closed. His evident intention is to kill SAM when he comes on right.*)

SAM walks quietly on left, and comes down center. It is now apparent that the last run across was made by someone else.

SAM. Ladies and gentlemen: I will now sing that beautiful ballad, entitled, "No Matter How Fast a Fish Swims, He Never Perspires."

BILL (*comes right of SAM*). Listen, stupid! You have interrupted me for the last time. You are going to stay here where I can keep an eye on you. And if you as much as open your mouth I am going to put you where the roots of the trees will grow right down into that funny face of yours. Understand?

SAM. Yas, suh.

BILL. Stand over. (*Shoves SAM a few steps left.*)

SAM. Yas, suh.

BILL. I am going to make you useful.

SAM. Yas, suh.

BILL. Can't you say anything but "Yas, suh"?

SAM. Yas, suh.

BILL. Then say it.

SAM. Yas, suh.

BILL (*goes close to SAM*). If you say "Yas, suh" again I'll break every bone in your head.

SAM. Yas—ma'am.

BILL (*gives SAM a hard look, then turns to audience*).

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am going to put the Peerless Combined Safety Razor and Potato Peeler to the severest test known to science. I am going to pluck a hair from the ivory dome of this poor fish, then split it from end to end, thus showing the wonderful cutting qualities of the blade.

(*Grabs SAM by the hair.*)

SAM. Ouch! Hol' on, boss.

BILL. I am holding on.

SAM. I mean leggo. I'se fastened to one end of dat hair.

BILL (*plucks a hair from SAM's head; to audience*). Now observe closely. (*He tries to split the hair with the razor; is not successful; tries again, then examines the hair closely.*) No wonder it won't work. (*Looks at SAM indignantly.*) This is wool!

SAM (*rubbing his head*). Sure it's wool. What you 'spect it to be—silk?

BILL (*to audience*). Folks, I am not going to take up any more of your valuable time. Gentlemen, this razor will cut off your whiskers, or beard, as the case may be. Ladies, this razor will peel apples, apricots, beets, carrots, turnips, parsnips or potatoes. It will scrape a peeling a foot long and a sixteenth of an inch thick off any potato, and you can use the corners for digging out the eyes. And what is the price of this peerless invention? Is it ten dollars? No! Is it five dollars? No! It is only one dollar! Ten thin dimes! Who wants this razor for a dollar? Don't all speak at once.

SAM (*after pause*). Dey seems to be kinda backward at comin' forward.

BILL. Ah! There's a fine, intelligent looking man holding up his hand. He wants a razor, I know.

SAM. Listen, boss; 'tain't no use tryin' to sell dat man nuffin'.

BILL. Why not?

SAM. 'Cause dat's — (*mention name of local man*), and he ain't got no more money dan a fish has hair.

BILL. Shut up.

SAM. But boss—

BILL (*taking step toward SAM*). Shut up!

SAM. I'm shut. (*BILL turns away.*) Can I keep open Sundays?

BILL (*to audience*). Folks, I know what you are thinking. You are thinking that I can't possibly afford to sell this beautiful razor for a dollar. But you never can tell by the looks of a frog how far he can jump! I am not only going to give you this razor for a dollar, but I am going to throw in this valuable razor strop. (*Takes strop from grip.*) It's made of hand-tanned Hungarian horse hide. Who wants the two articles for a dollar? Gentlemen, is it possible that you will continue to use the old-fashioned razor? Just as your father did years ago when you were youngsters? Will you scrape your face till it is raw? Just as your father did years ago when you were youngsters? When for a dollar you can buy this wonderful razor and with every dollar I give you the strop—

SAM. Just as your father did years ago when you were youngsters.

BILL (*turning to SAM*). Listen, you worm! If you interrupt me—

SAM. Boss, you ain't makin' me mad callin' me a worm, 'cause dat's all any man is. Yas, suh, dat's just what any man is—a worm. He crawls aroun' and crawls aroun' till along comes some chicken and picks him up.

BILL. Do you want to buy one of these razors?

SAM. No, suh.

BILL. You've got to shave. You can't go around looking like a cocoanut.

SAM. Say, boss, dat's sumpin' I wants to know about. How come a cocoanut anyway? Where does dey get cocoanuts?

BILL. Cocoanuts grow on trees.

SAM. Dog gone! Is dat so? A man told me dat monkeys laid dem.

BILL. You need a safety razor. Your face is all cut up. You have been using an old-fashioned blade.

SAM. No, suh, I hasn't.

BILL. Then how did you get all those scratches on your face?

SAM. I'se learning to eat wid a fork.

BILL. Aw, come on, loosen up! You need a razor sometimes.

SAM. Yas, suh. I needs a razor sometimes, and when I needs a razor I needs it powerful bad. But when I needs a razor I'll tell de worl' it ain't a safety razor dat I needs. Far be it from such!

BILL. Oh, well, I don't suppose that you have any money, anyway.

SAM. Sure I got money. I got eight dollars.

BILL. Well, well, who would have believed it? But as I said before, you never can tell from the looks of a frog how far he can jump. It's all yours. (*Puts strap of grip over SAM's shoulders.*)

SAM. What's all mine?

BILL. I have just sold you the state rights to the Peerless Combined Safety Razor and Potato Peeler.

SAM. How much it cost dis state rights?

BILL. Eight dollars.

SAM. No, suh. (*Starts to take strap from shoulders.*)

BILL. Hold on. Wait till I explain this to you. You can make a fortune selling these razors to the colored people down where you live. There are lots of colored people there, I suppose?

SAM. Yas, dey's lots of colored people down where I live, but dey don't need no razors.

BILL. How's that?

SAM. I lives next door to de nigger graveyard.

BILL. So you live next door to a graveyard, do you? (*Winks at audience, then lowers his voice.*) Did you ever see a ghost?

SAM. Yas, suh, de milkman's got one.

BILL. The milkman's got a ghost?

SAM. Oh; 'scuse me. I thought you said "goat."

BILL. Listen. When the clock has been striking the

hour of twelve on a dark and stormy night have you never looked over into that graveyard and seen something white?

SAM. No, suh, and I don't 'spect I ever will. Dey ain't never goin' to be nuffin' white in a nigger graveyard.

BILL. You can't tell. It may be waiting behind the fence ready to pounce on you.

SAM. No, suh. Fust place dere ain't no fence aroun' de graveyard. Dey don't need no fence aroun' a graveyard.

BILL. Why not?

SAM. 'Cause de folks dat's inside can't get out, and de folks dat's outside don't want to get in. Dey ain't no use argyfyin', boss, I don't want no state rights fo' eight dollars.

BILL. All right. I'll give you the state rights for nothing. I need a partner. The last partner I had fell in love with a woman and she turned his head so that he couldn't attend to business and I had to let him go.

SAM. Dat's de trouble wid gals. Dey will turn any man's head. Yas, suh, a good-lookin' gal will turn any man's head. Now you take dat tall gal dat's standin' out by de door, with a red hat on. (*He points over the heads of the audience; waits a moment to give them a chance to turn and look where he is pointing.*) See! What did I tell you? Turn any man's head!

BILL. Of course we will split fifty-fifty on all sales.

SAM. What's dis yere fifty-fifty, boss?

BILL. Don't you know what fifty-fifty means? Let me have that eight dollars a moment and I will explain it. (SAM hands BILL eight one-dollar bills.) Now suppose that you have sold eight dollars' worth of razors. We split the money fifty-fifty. That is, I take fifty per cent (*puts four bills in his pocket*) and you take fifty per cent. (*Gives SAM four bills.*) Understand?

SAM. No, suh! I'm dog-goned if I do.

BILL. I'll show you again. Give me that money. (*Grabs money from SAM.*) Here we have four dollars to be split fifty-fifty. You get two (*hands SAM two dollars*), and I get two. (*Puts money in pocket.*) Now do you understand?

SAM. I understands how I gets de two, but I don't understand how *you* gets de two.

BILL. I never saw such a stupid man in all my life. Give me that money. (*Takes SAM's two bills.*) Now listen carefully. Here is two dollars to be divided fifty-fifty. You take fifty per cent (*gives SAM one bill*), and I take fifty per cent. (*Pockets remaining bill.*) Now do you understand?

SAM. I understand you's fifty-fiftyin' me to death.

BILL. I will show you once more. But remember, this is the last time.

SAM. Yes, an' it's de las' dollar. How you goin' to fifty-fifty a one-dollar bill?

BILL (*taking the bill*). Of course that makes it more intricate. As the bill can not be divided, naturally I take the dollar and I let you owe me the fifty cents. (*Pockets the bill.*)

SAM. I ain't got no fifty cents.

BILL. In that case I take your watch. (*Takes watch from SAM's pocket.*)

SAM. Now we's all square?

BILL. Yes. Now all you have to do is to sell the razors.

SAM (*to audience, imitating BILL*). Folks, I ain't goin' to take up any more of my valuable time. Ladies, dis little invention will cut off your whiskey or beer, as de case may be. Gentlemen, if you places dis blade at an angle of forty-five against de face it will take a peelin' a foot long and sixteen inches thick off'n your dog-gone Hungarian horse hide. And you can use de corners to cut out your eyes. And all it cost is a dollar—ten tin dimes. (*Pause; to BILL.*) Dey's walkin' out on us, boss.

BILL. You have to sing them a song or tell them a story to hold their interest. Watch me. (*To audience.*) Just a minute, folks. One day last winter out in the state of Montana I sold one of these razors to a young man, at the same time making him a present of a cake of shaving soap. Not ten minutes after, sad to relate, he was captured by a band of Kickapoo Indians. The Indians carried him off into the

mountains, tied him to a stake and left him to starve. For three days and three nights he stayed there, slowly starving to death. But he was saved! And what saved him? I ask you, what saved that young man from starving to death?

SAM. He et de steak!

BILL. No!

SAM. No?

BILL. No.

SAM. He et de soap!

BILL. No!

SAM. No?

BILL. No.

SAM. Dog-gone! I give it up. What did he do?

BILL. He put his hand in his pocket, pulled out his trusty razor, cut the rope and saved his life!

SAM. Hot dog!

BILL (*as if passing out razors*). Stand back, please! Don't crowd! There are plenty of razors for everyone! (*To SAM.*) That's the way to do it.

SAM. Stan' back an' let me at 'em. (*Addresses audience, imitating BILL.*) Listen, folks. One day las' winter I was in a state of bananas. I sold a razor to a young man an' I made him a present of a cake of soap. Not ten minutes after, sad to relate, he was captured by a band of Peek-a-boo Indians. Dey tied him to a stake. What did he do to keep from starvin' to death? What did he do, I axes you? He put his hand in his pocket, pulled out his rusty razor, cut his throat and shaved his wife! Don't push! Stand back! I got more razors dan a pup has fleas!

BILL. That's very good. Now I am going to sell you the state rights in another invention. (*Takes a large funnel from grip.*) Do you know what that is?

SAM. Yas, suh, boss. Dat's a bung hole.

BILL. It isn't a bung hole.

SAM. It is a bung hole.

BILL. Don't argue with me. I know what a bung hole is. A bung hole is a hole in a barrel. I have put hundreds of bung holes in barrels.

SAM. You don't say so.

BILL. Certainly. It's no trick to put a bung hole in a barrel.

SAM. No, de trick is to take a bung hole out of a barrel.

BILL. You mean that this is a funnel. But you never can tell by the looks of a frog how far he can jump. This isn't a funnel. It is the celebrated Punko Fire Extinguisher. Now tell me, if you should awaken in the middle of the night and find that the house was burning down, what would you do?

SAM. I'd let it burn. De house don't belong to me.

BILL. That's just what I thought. Now let me tell you what happened to me. This wonderful invention not only saved my life, but it saved the lives of my helpless wife and children. It happened last Fourth of July—

SAM. You lie.

BILL. What?

SAM. I said "July."

BILL. I thought you said something else.

SAM. No, suh, I didn't say what you thought I said. 'Course I might 'a' thought what you said I said.

BILL. What?

SAM. Nev' mind. Go on tell me about your hopeless wife and children.

BILL. *Helpless* wife and children.

SAM. Dat's what I said.

BILL. Listen! (*Dramatically.*) One dark and stormy night I was awakened by a fearful sound. I sprang from my bed. Again the fearful sound. What was it I heard?

SAM. I ain't got the least suspicion, 'lessen it was your hopeless wife and children.

BILL. *Helpless* wife and children.

SAM. Dat's what I said.

BILL. I heard the fire bells pealing.

SAM. You mean you *saw* de fire bells peelin'. You can't *hear* nuffin' peelin'.

BILL. Pealing, pealing! P-e-a-l-i-n-g! (*Spelling.*) Don't you know what "pealing" is?

SAM. Sure. It's a foot long and sixteen inches thick.

BILL. Shut up! I heard the fire bells pealing. I saw the hungry flames devouring my home. I rushed to the window. From the street below I heard the hoarse cry, "Fire, fire!"

SAM. You heard a horse cry, "Fire, fire"? Whose horse was it?

BILL. What are you talking about?

SAM. I's talkin' about this conversational horse you mentions. I've heard of a horse laugh, but dog-gone, I never heard of a horse cryin'.

BILL. Shut up! The house was doomed! My first thought was for my helpless wife and children. I must save them! I did save them! What did I do? I ask you, what did I do?

SAM. You pulled out your rusty razor and cut the rope.

BILL. No!

SAM. No?

BILL. No. I seized the Punko Fire Extinguisher, placed it in position, and in a loud voice called, "Give me water—water—*water!*" In ten minutes the fire was out!

SAM. Hot-dog! And what became of your hipless wife and children?

BILL. Not "hipless"; hopeless. Confound you, you've got me talking that way. I mean "helpless." But it's no use trying to tell you anything. I'll have to show you. Put down that grip. (SAM puts grip on stage right of him.) First I put the extinguisher in position. (Puts spout of funnel in the band of SAM's trousers.) Now all you have to do is to cry, "Water, water, *water!*" with a rising inflection.

SAM. Dat's easy, ain't it? What do I do after dat?

BILL. Nothing. I'll do the rest.

SAM (*stands facing audience, the funnel sticking in the top of his trousers; he bawls in a loud voice*). Give me water, water, *water* with a rising inflection! Give me water, water, *water* with a rising inflection!

BILL (*takes a wide-mouthed bottle of water from the*

grip, removes the cork and pours about a cupful into the top of the funnel). There's the water. *(He puts bottle on stage and, with his back turned toward SAM, laughs immoderately.)*

SAM *(looks at BILL in a puzzled manner, looks at funnel, then turning to audience again, bawls).* I want water, water, water, with a rising inflection!

BILL *(looks at SAM in surprise).* You want water, eh? All right, here it is! *(Picks up bottle and pours another cupful into funnel. Repeats business of laugh as before.)*

SAM *(paying no attention to BILL, yells).* I want water, water, water with a rising inflection! I gotta have more water, water, water with a rising inflection!

BILL *(peevishly).* I'll give you more water! *(Pours the entire contents of the bottle into the funnel, then stands watching the effect on SAM.)*

SAM *(apparently none the worse for being drenched).* Give me water, water, water with a rising inflection!

BILL *(grabs funnel away from SAM; angrily).* What's the matter with you, dumbbell?

SAM. Dey ain't nuffin' de matter with me, boss.

BILL. Can't you see what I've been doing?

SAM. No. What you been doin', boss?

BILL. I've been soaking you with water for the last five minutes.

SAM. You thinks you has, boss, but you never can tell from the looks of a frog how far he can jump! *(He pulls a hot-water bag from the top of his trousers and holds it up in full view of the audience.)*

(BILL looks at bag in consternation, then exits hastily, right. SAM grins at audience and follows BILL off right.)

CURTAIN.

NOTE. SAM should assist BILL in placing the funnel in the waist-band of his trousers, taking care that the spout of the funnel enters the neck of the hot-water bag. The bag should be invisible to the audience. It may be suspended from the belt by a thread strong

enough to hold it in place, but light enough to be broken and allow SAM to remove bag.

If the performers desire to close the act with a song, they should not exit at the conclusion of the hot-water-bag gag, but should go center. The orchestra should pick up the introduction of the song when the laugh begins to die away. The song, "Look Out Below," is recommended. It may be had from the publishers of this sketch for 30 cents, postpaid.

W.P. Lee



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